



Marin Housing Authority

Community Working Group

Meeting Summary

March 23, 2015

Attendees: Barbara Clifton Zarate, Caroline Peattie, Denni Brusseau, Dr. Shirley Thornton, Duronn Austin, Homer Hall, Katherine Boschetto, Kevin Coleman, Ladasha Berry, Lieutenant Scott Anderson, Liz Darby, Mary Davis, Michael Tabb, Nancy Johnson, Nicole Dorhan, Ora Hatheway, Rondel Gibson, Royce Mclemore, Demitris Shavers

Dinner started at 6:10pm

Welcome, Meeting Process, Introductions (6:30pm)

(Facilitator: Dwayne Jones)

Meeting opened with an introduction of members and a review of housing revitalization models that came out of the previous meeting:

- Historic Preservation and Enhancement
- Land Trust tied to a Co-op
- Mixed Income
- Basic Renovation/ Maintenance

There was no discussion by the WG or the comment by the Public on this item

Education Panel Discussion (6:45pm)

(Facilitator: Lisa Gray/ Saleem Shakir-Gilmore)

Saleem introduced himself as a former classroom teacher and educational consultant who has experience working in the Marin City community. He introduced the format of the panel discussion. The Panelists were Royce McElmore (resident, WG member), Dr. Shirley Thornton (educator, WG member), Alvin Gilmore (Staff, Bridge the Gap College Prep), Bettie Hodges (Director, Hannah Project), Leah Herrera (Vice President, Tamalpias HS), Wendy Stratton (Vice President, Tamalpias HS), and Julie Synyard (President, Tamalpias HS).

Panel Discussion Questions and Responses

1. *What core challenges do students in public schools face?*
2. *What system barriers exist that affects a student's ability to access education and perform well in school?*

Royce McElmore highlighted that the student of today is different from the student of the past and requires structure and rigor. Students are less fearful of school discipline and parents are less active in supporting the school expectations. She, also, pointed to systemic issues such as institutionalized racism.

Dr. Thornton agreed with the position that parents and communities can play a more active role in the academic lives of students. She lifted up the potential of elders in the community to support the education of students. Dr. Thornton talked about disparities between white students and black students and their level of school preparedness at the early elementary school level. She pointed out that higher expectations lead to higher performance.

Tamalpais High School (THS) Administration: The principal and two of these three vice principals represented THS. They spoke to the fact that many students from Marin City are not high school ready upon entering and are not college/ career ready upon graduation. THS has eliminated remediation classes and is refocusing so that all students are grade level and college ready. There is no substantive connection/ communication between THS and Marin City families; outreach attempts have been ineffective. The administration acknowledged the institutional barriers to success for Marin City students.

Bettie Hodges spoke to the need for additional support in the face of the reduction in remediation classes and community services that are not coordinated with the school or each other. She spoke to the disillusionment of students who do not value education and do not see a bright future. Bettie spoke to the disparity between a low school population and a high rate of suspension/ expulsion for students of color. She suggested that high turnover of leadership and a lack of diversity of the staff is contributing to the disproportionate suspension/ expulsion rates. While Bettie concurred with the position that we should have high expectations for all students, she challenged the group to find ways to coordinate and increase academic supports to help student meet those expectations.

Alvin Gilmore echoed many of the challenges/ barriers lifted up by other panelists including the idea that systems like racism, sexism, and homophobia contribute to the outcomes of students. Many students of color do not see themselves in the staff at the school or in the many of the leaders in Marin County and increased engagement is needed. He then spoke to the importance of history and culture as a tool to empower and orient African American students and other students of color. Alvin emphasized identifying the root causes of some of the outcomes that the WG wants to improve; as well as identifying the linkages between the barriers that the WG are calling out in order to develop a holistic response.

Saleem opened the floor for questions and comments from the WG members who asked questions about accountability, structure, access, limitations, and what is working in schools. Some expressed concerns that the discussion did not yield a real outcome, which prompted an overview of the case study process that was next on the agendas.

Public comment included the following questions and concerns.

- Some Marin City students lack the resources too afford tutoring or access homework online

- Marin City students failing
- Discipline policies that lead to Marin City students being disproportionately suspended/ expelled
- Drug and alcohol issues among students

Saleem then asked panelists to speak to assets and promising models in their closing comments.

3. *What opportunities and/or assets exist in the system and community that can enhance educational outcomes?*

4. *What promising models or strategies are you seeing or working on?*

Assets/ best practices identified by the panel include:

- Creating standards
- Developing partnerships
- Gender specific learning
- Building relationships with marginalized students
- Freedom school model
- Implementing social/emotional supports particularly for students of color
- Summer Bridge model
- Creating culturally relevant curriculum
- Mentoring: High schoolers mentor Middle schoolers who mentor Elementary schoolers
- Year round k-8 school
- Focus on self determination
- Promoting and using community assets
- Providing free opportunities to educational experiences
- Program partnerships between Tam HS & MC schools
- Mentoring programs 5-18 y/o
- Church partnerships with the community around educational goals

Additional Questions from the Public:

- What about programs for 0-5 years old?
Currently First five looks at Early Childhood Education
- Students coming to school unprepared, what is in place for them?
Tam representatives gave a few examples
- What will be provided for children this summer?
Housing Authority will take under advisement
- How to prepare parents before they become parents?
- How are kids getting passed without being proficient?
Students are passed with “D’s”; yet, they cannot enter college with a “D” average.
- What is social promotion?

Prior to entering high school students cannot be held back for more than one year due to laws that prohibit students being in the same class if they are two or more year apart in age.

- How are grades constructed?
Using different formulas based on the district
- Do restorative Justice programs exist at THS?
They are in the development stages; administration is looking at models from other schools.
- What recreational opportunities are available for kids?
No clear response
- How are programs how assessed?
Depends on the program and district
- How can community access data on performance, attendance, and discipline actions for Marin City Students in local high schools?
District has that info

Lisa Gray closed the panel discussion with a brief overview of case studies that demonstrated communities that successfully advocated for benefits that served residents as part of the revitalization process. The group agreed to agendaize a discussion of case studies from Sacramento, CA, Fresno, CA, and Tacoma, WA.

Workforce: A Pre Conversation (tabled)

(Facilitator: Lisa Gray)

Due to the length and richness of the Education Panel discussion, there was no time for this agenda item. The group agreed to table this item until the next meeting and expand the discussion to a similar panel format used for the education discussion.

Close – Next step (8:27pm)

(Facilitator: Lisa Gray)

LG confirmed with the group that the next meeting is April 20 at 6pm.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30pm.